

Australian Technology Network

FIVE UNIVERSITIES: ONE VISION



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MEDIA RELEASE

RESEARCH DOLLARS MUST FOCUS ON INDUSTRY AND COMMUNITY NEEDS – TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITIES

Australia's leading technology universities say future research into Australia's key social, economic and environmental issues is at risk unless there is a significant increase in funding from the government into the national research effort. Along with increasing its investment, Government must allocate more funds to research which is closely aligned with industry and community needs.

The Australian Technology Network (*ATN*), which makes a significant contribution to the national innovation agenda, says industry also has a major role to play in ensuring the development of the national research agenda.

ATN Chair and Vice-Chancellor of the Queensland University of Technology, Professor Peter Coaldrake, says with the Government close to announcing its commitment to research and innovation, Government, business and industry must seriously consider their commitment to research funding.

"The Australian Industry Group, in its report *'R&D Expenditure and Drivers in Australian Manufacturing'* revealed that 96% of Australian manufacturers engage in no research, with R&D still seen as a short-term cost," Professor Coaldrake said. "And yet our universities are opening new frontiers of R&D, with significant industry partnerships and spin-off activities. Australian industry is notoriously reluctant to invest in research and development, and while many positive moves have been made to bring business and universities closer together in research there is still a long way to go," Professor Coaldrake said.

"Over the past decade, Australia's universities have become more involved with the private sector and the community to the point where they are now balancing the more traditional forms of basic research with research projects involving specific commercial objectives. However, over the same period, funding for Australia's research infrastructure has remained static."

Professor Coaldrake said there must to be an increase in infrastructure funding to levels of international comparators and an increase in research funding through the Australian Research Council.

"The fact remains that the ATN's research capacity has grown because we have rewarded performance and targeted funding to key strengths. The ATN group, with its strong focus on the generation and application of knowledge in areas as broad as engineering, environment, information technology, biotechnology, allied health and creative industries, exemplifies many of the goals of research policy that have been articulated by government and industry.

"Our challenge is to see that the mechanisms of research funding support, rather than work against, these goals.

Professor Coaldrake said the ATN would be looking for a commitment from Government which indicates a commitment to achieving a sector wide goal of research and development investment across all sections of the economy of 2 per cent of GDP within 6-years and 3 percent by 2020.

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